

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-15

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DRAFTED BY S/S-O: LMATTESON

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS STATE 058846

TOSEC 571

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO BUDAPEST, JAKARTA,
TEHRAN, WARSAW, USDEL JEC PARIS, CINCPAC FROM SAIGON 15 MAR.

QUOTE: UNCLAS SAIGON 2931

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: APER, PINS, VS

SUBJECT: "PRG" COMMENTS ON FATE OF AMERICANS IN BAN ME THUOT

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. DURING QUESTION PERIOD AT WEEKLY SAIGON PRESS CONFERENCE
MARCH 15 "PRG" SPOKESMAN WAS ASKED ABOUT FATE OF AMERICANS
TRAPPED IN BAN ME THUOT, WHICH "PRG" CLAIMS TO COMPLETELY
CONTROL. SPOKESMAN REPLIED, "I HAVE NO INFORMATION ABOUT
THE AMERICANS OR ANY FOREIGN RESIDENTS IN BAN ME THUOT
PROVINCIAL CAPITAL. BUT I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT ANY FOREIGN
RESIDENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM, EVEN INCLUDING HONEST AMERICANS
(SIC) -- ALL THESE PERSONS ARE GIVEN A POLICY OF ASSURANCE
AND PROTECTION FROM THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT. OF COURSE,
WITH REGARD TO AMERICAN MILITARY ADVISERS, THEY WILL BE GIVEN
SPECIAL TREATMENT BECAUSE THEY ARE IN A SPECIAL CATEGORY."
UNFORTUNATELY, TAPE REEL CHANGE AT THAT MOMENT OBLITERATED
OUR VERBATIM RECORDING. UPI CORRESPONDENT WHO ATTENDED PRESS
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CONFERENCE INFORMED US, HOWEVER, THAT SPOKESMAN WENT ON TO SAY

THAT FOREIGNERS WOULD EVENTUALLY BE RELEASED EXCEPT FOR "MILITARY ADVISERS," WHO WERE THERE IN "VIOLATION" OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT. ASKED HOW "PRG" WOULD IDENTIFY THESE "MILITARY ADVISERS," SPOKESMAN REPLIED THAT THEY HAD THEIR WAYS OF KNOWING.

2. AT LATER POINT IN QUESTIONING, SPOKESMAN DENIED ANY ICCS TEAM WAS IN BAN ME THUOT AT TIME OF CAPTURE. ASKED SPECIFICALLY ABOUT IRANIANS AND INDONESIANS FROM ICCS KNOWN TO BE THERE, SPOKESMAN REPEATED THAT THERE WAS NO ICCS "TEAM" THERE, "BUT IF THERE ARE REALLY IRANIAN OR INDONESIAN PEOPLE IN BAN ME THUOT, THAT IS ANOTHER QUESTION. THEY WILL RECEIVE HUMANE AND KIND TREATMENT FROM THE PRG, AS THOSE ACCORDED FOREIGN RESIDENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM."
LEHMANN UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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